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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 180713633-9174-02]

RTID 0648-XY005

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Blackspotted/Rougheye Rockfish in the Western and Central Aleutian Districts of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Temporary rule; closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is prohibiting retention of blackspotted/rougheye rockfish in the Western and Central Aleutian Districts of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area (BSAI). This action is necessary because the 2019 blackspotted/rougheye rockfish total allowable catch (TAC) in the Western and Central Districts of the BSAI has been reached.

DATES: Effective 1200 hours, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), August 6, 2019, through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2019.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Steve Whitney, 907-586-7228.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS manages the groundfish fishery in the BSAI according to the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area (FMP) prepared by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council under authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

Regulations governing fishing by U.S. vessels in accordance with the FMP appear at subpart H of 50 CFR part 600 and 50 CFR part 679.

The 2019 blackspotted/rougheye rockfish TAC in the Western and Central Aleutian Districts of the BSAI is 173 metric tons (mt) as established by the final 2019 and 2020 harvest specifications for groundfish in the BSAI (84 FR 9000, March 13, 2019). In accordance with § 679.20(d)(2), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), has determined that the 2019 blackspotted/rougheye rockfish TAC in the Western and Central Aleutian Districts of the BSAI has been reached. Therefore, NMFS is requiring that blackspotted/rougheye rockfish in the Western and Central Aleutian Districts of the BSAI be treated as prohibited species in accordance with 679.21(b).

Classification

This action responds to the best available information recently obtained from the fishery. The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA (AA), finds good cause to waive the requirement to provide prior notice and opportunity for public comment pursuant to the authority set forth at 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B) as such requirement is impracticable and contrary to the public interest. This requirement is impracticable and contrary to the public interest as it would prevent NMFS from responding to the most recent fisheries data in a timely fashion and would delay prohibiting retention of blackspotted/rougheye rockfish in the Western and Central Aleutian Districts of the BSAI. NMFS was unable to publish a notice providing time for public comment because the most recent, relevant data only became available as August 5, 2019.

The AA also finds good cause to waive the 30-day delay in the effective date of this action under 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3). This finding is based upon the reasons provided above for waiver of prior notice and opportunity for public comment.

This action is required by § 679.20 and § 679.21 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: August 6, 2019.

Jennifer M. Wallace,
Acting Director,
Office of Sustainable Fisheries,
National Marine Fisheries Service.

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